

Economic Development Advisory Council

1.29.14 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Present:

Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co
Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission
Mark Fougere, Board of Selectmen
Lyle Fulkerson, HPM Insurance
Wendy Hunt, Milford Improvement Team
Janet Langdell, Planning Board
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank
Penny Seaver, Bean Seaver & Smith
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc.

Excused:

Michael Brisebois, Hitchiner Mfg Co
Rosie Deloge, Milford School System
John McCormack, TIFD
John Siergiewicz, Hollis Line Machine

Bill Parker, Director Community Development
Shirley Wilson, Recording secretary

M. Ciardelli called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Minutes:

J. Langdell made a motion to accept the minutes from 12/04/13. D. White seconded and all in favor.

Introductions of new members:

M. Ciardelli welcomed Lyle Fulkerson and Wendy Hunt to the council. B. Parker noted that we will have to go through the process of officially appointing Lyle and Wendy.

L. Fulkerson introduced himself and said he is the president of HPM Insurance, formerly Holt, Proctor and McBriarty Insurance. We have several offices in various locations and have just gone through the re-branding process over the past year.

W. Hunt introduced herself and said she was the “new Tracey” for the Milford Improvement Team and looked forward to working with everyone especially on the economic development aspect of this job. Previously she was the Community Development Director for Opportunity Networks, a non-profit agency.

Milford Fire Department: Achievement of High ISO rating:

Captain Jeff Marshall, a fifteen year veteran of the department, explained that over the past ten years we have been going through a process of reevaluating some components of the Fire Department and this morning is our first public release of this information. This process is really around the value of homeowners insurance. About half the town’s property from a valuation perspective is covered by the hydrant district which impacts the cost of homeowners and commercial fire insurance costs. Insurance companies have an evaluation process that determines the ability of a town’s fire department to provide fire suppression for building protection. Insurance Services Office (ISO) has been in the business of rating fire service based around insurance companies for a long time, dating back to Fire Companies where homeowners paid to have protection. L. Fulkerson described the history of Fire Companies citing several examples of the cast iron or metal plaque located on houses indicated that the dues were paid and the fire department could then put out the fire. J. Marshall added that although not seen in New England for the past fifty years, fire districts or companies still do exist in some manor in other parts of the country and homeowners outside that district are unprotected.

The ISO has an evaluation process and they evaluate 44,000 departments nationwide, typically every five years. They grade us with 1 being the best to 10 being the worst or unrated. We have a split rating; the hydrant district and outside the hydrant district. It’s all about water and we can and do provide lots of water on wheels. ISO looks at how many gallons per minute we can sustain for a two hour period although there is not a single house in town that would require two hour suppression at 1,000 gallons per minute. Ten years ago the Fire Department started looking at these standards and determined that we are doing good in the hydrant district, but what can we

do as a process of our management through capital improvements, new equipment purchases and training, to meet the needs of Milford and incorporate ISO improvements as well. We have to use caution around these national standards because we service the citizens of Milford first. We got a new water supply truck, engine #4 that is designed to provide 2,000 gal per minute and carry 1,600 gallons of water. Through this process we also had to do some training so we coordinated a witness training where ISO sent someone out to watch us train in the process of moving water at 1,000 gallons per minute, sustained for two hours. We brought in fifteen communities all from Hillsborough County to do a witness drill where we practiced and got great input and experience from other towns that are also going through the ISO process. As of April 1st, we will go from a rating of 4 to a 3. There are only thirty departments in New Hampshire that have a rating of 3 or better and none of those departments that service a town the size of Milford, 15,000 people in 25 square miles, are made up of a combination department like ours. We consist of fifty volunteers and four full time employees which includes the Chief so we are very proud of the 3 rating. Outside the hydrant district we went from a 9 to a 4 and there is no other fire department in the state that is rated a 4 outside the hydrant district. It not only validates the work we've been doing for ten years, but it has the potential of saving homeowners a lot of money on their insurance. L. Fulkerson added that all insurance companies factor in the ISO rating in some manner of for protection classes. New Hampshire has a lot of protection class 9 services and that really does factor into the overall rating for the cost of homeowners insurance. It is a variable that may or may not impact an individual's insurance costs but it is great to have made this progress.

J. Marshall said we will be getting more information out there; in the voter's guide, on the website and on our Facebook page. The message is: This goes into effect on April 1st, so have a conversation with your insurance agent. Another variable is fire loss and we are fortunate that in the last ten years Milford has only had one fire where Amherst has had a tough string of fires over the last eighteen months. The ISO rating also includes our response time and we do well because we have ten years of statistics and a good location as all roads lead to the Oval. There are lots of things associated with fire safety, fire suppression and fire prevention and those dovetail into building, planning and code enforcement. All those things become important and filter into that rating. ISO recognizes our prevention efforts and that becomes part of the whole community structure.

B. Parker noted that the Building Department also went through a similar ISO process and their rating went from a 5 to a 3 for effectiveness of applying building codes.

D. White added that the Water Department went through the ISO rating process for water distribution. Milford has an awesome water service for the in town district. Not only can we meet the demand for good clean drinking water, but we have bulk storage, hydrants and distribution. How many other towns have four storage tanks as back-up? Next year, one factor to look at will be expanding the hydrant district to go up Elm St to provide even more fire protection. That's economic development because that could be a factor when buying a house here. J. Marshall stated that the ISO rating is made up of 50% MFD, 40% Water Department and 10% Communications. The Water Department is rated really high, in the 90% range or an ISO rating of 1. They keep the hydrants well maintained, painted and cleared of snow. The Water Department is fantastic to work with and is always open to conversation for improvement.

J. Marshall stated that commercial property insurance is generally evaluated on a one by one basis and will never be rated more than what the fire department is rated but we can help change their rating through pre-planning where we walk through the building to identify and understand the hazards. Part of the pre-planning includes the technology investment we've made. We purchased iPads for the fire apparatus and are able to use a GIS system which will contain all the pre-planning information for that structure as well as E911 information for us volunteers to respond appropriately. Our latest investment is with a Nashua company, Zco, for a tool called Public Eye® which integrates information from our fire inspection program that is simple for the user. We also offer programs such as fire extinguisher training which helps reduce the risk. We are working with Guy on marketing this information and will have a blurb in the Voter's Guide. We're also thinking about a media day because we want more than just a press release. We want to tell a story; this is a capstone of a lot of work by a lot of people in the Fire Department, the Building Department, the Planning Department and the Water Department and the underlying story is that this is a message of collaboration. We're here to be part of the total picture and it's not just the Fire Department. It's all the great things we do in this town. We want to be able to make sure that the businesses, homeowners and citizens have information that helps them make better decisions. We'd like to

continue that message into the insurance company and real estate markets. We want to get that information out there into the community through the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lion's Club, MIT, etc.

L. Fulkerson said it's really important as you release this information to state that this is one variable of many in the insurance process and not everybody will see a reduction in their rates. He sits on the State Board and several advisory boards and offered to help get the message out there.

J. Langdell asked if there was an opportunity here to get GTM or the Tech Center students involved to do a short presentation for Channel 21 and get links on the website. As a regular viewer, video is better than slides.

M. Ciardelli thanked Jeff for sharing the news and the information.

Follow up from December 16, 2013 Joint Worksession and Warrant Articles

M. Ciardelli reviewed the worksession discussion. B. Parker distributed copies of the draft warrant articles. J. Langdell said in comparing what was talked about at the December meeting and the current warrant, three articles were taken off by the Selectmen. Osgood Pond and the two conservation items, and there is an additional article for \$10,000 for the Labor Day Parade.

M. Fougere summarized the articles and stated that the Budget Advisory Committee will be making their recommendations; they've taken a vote on some but not others. From an economic development standpoint, the important ones are:

- Dram Cup Hill water storage tank
- The operating budget
- South St Railroad improvements
- Bridge Replacement Capital Reserve - He referenced the Jennison Rd Bridge that went out a few years ago and said there are others near that same state. We have to come up with \$90,000 in 2 years as part of an 80/20 grant with the State. The rest of the money will go towards engineering plans for bridges to be more proactive. This summer our engineer will be evaluating the bridge crossings in town so that we can come up with a priority plan for what's next after Jennison Rd. The bridge on Mason Rd is in tough shape and the Savage Rd Bridge has a weight limit now. As far as economic development, obviously maintaining the existing infrastructure is very important and the Selectmen will be trying to ramp that up.
- Fire Ladder Truck Replacement
- Annual Labor Day Parade - It is a positive event that brings people into Milford and highlights the community. J. Langdell brought up a statement made at the budget and bond hearing in that, the VFW had only been able to raise \$300 for the last parade. Questions arose to how effective their campaigning and fundraising had been because they hadn't even gone to the Rotary Club last year. The Keyes and Kaley trusts are in the process of putting a proposal together for the VFW to suggest that if we guarantee \$5,000 right now would they decrease the warrant article by that amount. The thought being, that may help soften the blow of the tax increase this year and hopefully open the door to ask for assistance. They do great job of putting that parade on, but maybe they need more help on the front end and could work with the Town and other civic organizations to fundraise. This is an important piece of our bigger picture, but from the Town's perspective, it may be that leadership will need to put its arms around this to rejuvenate this and to help it continue to be part of the gems that make the crown of Milford.
- The Osgood Pond project was reluctantly removed from the warrant because of the potential tax increase this year, but it's not going to go away. It's been kicking around for twenty years now and the cost will be around \$600,000 to do whole project. We have a plan and will have to put it on the warrant sometime and let the voters decide what to do.
- Sale or Other Disposition of Resources - In 2007, the Town authorized the Selectmen to sell a million yards of gravel but that had a time limit, so this article will give a re-authorization to sell materials at Brox. This summer we hope to send out an RFP to bring an engineer in to look at getting a gravel permit. Once the permit is in hand, then we'll go out to bid and start selling the gravel. H. Leach inquired what those funds would go to. M. Fougere said initially into the reserve fund balance or offsetting the tax rate. If we wanted to use those funds for something else like infrastructure or new ball fields, we'd have to go to town vote with a warrant article. However, even if we get a permit, there has to be a market for the material. J. Langdell added

that there are individuals who are against this warrant article and sending emails out to not support this because they want to keep Brox unexcavated and pristine.

M. Fougere gave an overview of the petition articles and said as of Monday the Budget Advisory Committee was not supporting the budget so we cut \$200,000. If the BAC doesn't support it then most likely the voters will not support it and there is the possibility of a default budget. The BAC is also not supporting the band concerts and fireworks, so there will be a lot discussed at the deliberative session this Saturday. J. Langdell inquired how the budget was reduced. M. Fougere said with an eraser; the salary increase was reduced by \$45,000 and basically it was left it to Guy to handle the details. B. Parker added that was passed to the department heads who were scrambling around yesterday morning having to cut their budgets.

W. Hunt initiated a brief discussion on how petition warrant articles are changed. She noted that she will be at the deliberative session to support Milford; that is the purpose of MIT, and their biggest promotion is the Pumpkin Festival.

J. Langdell gave a heads up for article #14 saying that she heard from several different people who moved to Milford because of the transportation options, so please vote yes.

M. Ciardelli inquired about the role of EDAC in this process. B. Parker said in past years various groups put their support into the Voters guide. After a lengthy discussion on how specific to be with the group statement, it was decided that infrastructure improvements be the focus with support for quality of life. B. Parker said he will get something written and distributed for review in support of the Dram Cup Hill water storage tank and the capital reserve for bridges as well as those functions which add to the quality of life or bring people into Town.

L. Fulkerson asked how the Town perceives this group because we're sending out an open letter to support articles that impact the economic development in Milford. If you ask someone on the street who we are, what we are trying to do and what our purpose is, will that resonate with anybody? D. White said from the business community, we are very supportive but the average person doesn't know this group exists. L. Fulkerson said in terms of the way this is presented, it can be about branding this group. It can be mindful of economic development for the Town and promote this group to businesses and citizens to show there is somebody out there with their interests in mind. The point is to market the EDAC and economic development and to let people know that here is a group of folks from the community, separate and apart from own personal agendas who are looking at how to make Milford more economically vibrant and what do we need to do to bring people into the town. That gives us a broad range to talk about and allows the group to go into areas that might be a little fuzzy and make recommendations. H. Leach said the term economically vibrant is a much better phrase than the term growth which can be a tough word. We're looking for better not bigger. L. Fulkerson said this is all predicated on a branding campaign and is very timely with Nashua's recent release. What is Milford trying to do? I had a recent conversation with someone about what Milford wants to be when it grows up. I am interested in this group because we're trying to figure that out. D. White said this Board is not voted in, so we can give our opinions without fallout. We are a respected group of business people. L. Fulkerson said we should push that out a little bit more and let other people know who we are.

EDAC Work Plan/Priorities for 2014

D. White said the Selectmen will have two vacancies this year and there may be changes on the Board. Should we wait for them to come up with an agenda or should we take the agenda to them? B. Parker suggested taking the agenda to the Selectmen. M. Fougere said we will be talking about goals and based on the meeting this summer, infrastructure will be a continued focus of the Board to make sure the infrastructure and the look of the community is taken up and actively looked at. It's a small item but the Oval is getting tired and we'd like to do an evaluation on that. D. White asked how long it would take to do an evaluation and how long will it take to get the work done.

J. Langdell said she frequently hears references to Milford and tourism. Has anyone looked at that and is that what we want to be when we grow up? Is it valid? That kind of drives the other pieces. We do have a goal relative to marketing opportunities, but has anyone defined that? M. Fougere said tourism is a component but it depends on what you are looking at. J. Langdell said she used that example to get to the larger discussion to see if

our work plan and our priorities for this year has anything to do with item #5 of the executive summary in our fostering document. The question is not tourism but what do we work on.

D. White said we need to be of support to the Selectmen from the local business community to encourage the departments in town to work on the low hanging fruit and do regular maintenance and then support small capital funds. The taxpayers want to see something for their taxes. It's also about business retention. L. Fulkerson said so much of branding and sponsorship is about return on investment and taxes are no different. This group can help recommend what the ROI of investing in Milford is from an economic perspective by way of observation. Is it tourism or hospitality? Coming into town, is it tired? Do the buildings need some work? If you want to showcase the Oval, common sense dictates that's what you fix up first. You have to be careful how you frame things and this group could help focus the priorities.

H. Leach said that the survey was originated to determine an economic development philosophy or statement for the Town. We did the survey but one of the subcommittees needs to circulate back and take the information from that survey and present it to the community. We brought it to the Planning Board and the Selectmen but we need to finish the project. J. Langdell said we walked into this thinking we needed a policy statement but what if we turn this and make recommendations to make Milford economically more vibrant and get more specific. L. Fulkerson asked if it makes sense to lead with the survey and use that to summarize what this group does. Then stage press releases on the warrant articles. J. Langdell noted that the survey only consisted of 170 responses out of 10,000-15,000 residents but the results are important to the discussion. L. Fulkerson said we could say they were the preliminary results of the survey. B. Parker said we could certainly do a guest commentary in the Cabinet, but the timeframe may be too short.

D. White said that EDAC or a smaller committee should work with the Selectmen, the Planning Board and other departments to support and promote infrastructure. H. Leach added that there are several major projects that the Town will take on; South St Improvements, bridge work and West Elm St. So at some point in time, because we said we needed this for economic development, we have to support the Select Board in communicating to the taxpayers that this is important. It equates to putting money into your house; insulation is not as exciting as putting in a new kitchen counter so we as EDAC need to raise the importance of communication. L. Fulkerson said we could educate the community as to how infrastructure supports economic development and create a separate awareness. H. Leach said a good example of that was the article in the Cabinet about the South St improvements and the headline read the Town may use eminent domain. The subcommittee on infrastructure could start with public relations and education.

Development updates:

- St. Joseph's/Milford Medical Center is working through the Planning Board process.
- Great Bridge Properties is going to the Planning Board for a multi-family apartment project off Capron Rd.
- Cumberland Farms is going before the Planning Board on the former 99 Restaurant Site.
- Classic Bay Farms equestrian riding arena.
- We just talked with Robert Cruess regarding some interest in the vacant lot next to the Irving Station.
- Fieldstone Land Consultants are building a new office on Elm St.

W. Hunt said MIT will be partnering with the Chamber of Commerce to do a vacant building tour. We are still in the preliminary stages but we will combine the towns of Milford Amherst to promote available commercial business space. We are also working on a QR historical tour in cooperation with the Conservation Commission, the Heritage Commission and the Historical Society. Additionally, there is a new sign at the Ambulance Facility, landscaping in front of the Police Department and hopefully something for DPW in the works. We are trying to enhance the gateways into town.

J. Langdell brought up the zoning changes on warrant that re-zones the area between South St and Ponemah Hill Rd. D. White said that is major plus for economic development.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15AM